United Nations E/CN.5/2001/NGO/10

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 February 2001

Original: English

Commission for Social Development
Thirty-ninth session
13-23 February 2001
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development: review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups

Statement submitted by American Association of Retired Persons, Caritas Internationalis (International Confederation of Catholic Organizations for Charitable and Social Actions), HelpAge International, International Alliance of Women, International Council of Women, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation on Ageing, Rotary International, Soroptimist International, Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, European Federation of Older Students at the Universities, Institute of Inter-Balkan Relations, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of University Women, Women's International Zionist Organization, World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council; and Consumers International, European Federation for the Welfare of the Elderly, International Association of Charities, International Inner Wheel, International Roundtable for the Advancement of Counselling, and World Peace Council, non-governmental organizations on the Roster of the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

* E/CN.5/2001/1.

01-25150 (E) 150201

Considering that

- the world is facing an unprecedented demographic change: twenty years were added to the average human lifespan, the global population of older persons is expected to triple in thirty years. This demographic revolution interacts closely with questions of economic stability, poverty, gender advancement, issues of social integration, and questions of maintaining traditions and values;

- the awareness of these demographic developments and the ensuing societal implications was considerably heightened as a result of the International Year of Older Persons, 1999, and of the activities carried out in many countries under its motto „Towards A Society for All Ages!";

- ageing with its particular risks and opportunities has become a normative period of the life course, and rightfully deserves as much attention as the other periods of life, all of them having their impact on the functioning of societies;

- there is a wide range of flexibility and adaptability in older persons and an enormous capacity for development in the later life-course: acquiring and increasing competences, being active and productive, offering contributions to their families and societies, increasing individual knowledge and experience and enhancing their potential for reflection and judgement;

- societies need the contribution of older persons, i.a. to understand their past, the way they have evolved, and as a solid base for further authentic and sustainable development;

- globalization, often considered a threat to existing structures, may serve, in a dialogue among civilizations, to better understand the interdependence of countries at different stages of development and their diverse ways of approaching issues of ageing, as well as the shortcomings in dealing with them;

- the General Assembly (resolution 54/262) decided to convene a Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 to review the outcome of the first World Assembly of 1982 and to adopt a revised Plan of Action on Ageing and a Long-Term Strategy on Ageing.

We, therefore

remind of the necessity to enhance diversified measures of social protection to reduce the vulnerability of the rising numbers of older persons, and particularly of very old persons which in many countries are the fastest rising population group and contain a high proportion of women;

appeal to governments and all players of civil society to combat discrimination in any form on the grounds of advanced age, be it exclusion, disregard, neglect, or even violence;

request the development of policies to create conditions that enable older persons to contribute to their societies; the measures should be manifold and should include:

- protection of older persons against poverty by ensuring safety of income, living arrangements and environment, and consumer protection;
- access to education, including technical means of information and communication;
- preventive, curative and rehabilitative services for enhanced wellbeing and health throughout the life-span;
- encouragement and promotion of the participation of older persons in all areas of social life, based on equity and exchange, and ranging from family life, various networks in community life to decision making in local and national political arenas;
- support, assistance and counselling for families who care for older members, with a view to strengthen intergenerational family relationships;
- special attention to professional, semi-professional, informal and voluntary services for older persons;

request also that policies be designed and formulated in a language that is understandable and convincing for the end-users, and that they be shaped to enhance intergenerational exchange and mutual respect at all levels of society;

urge that particular attention be paid, worldwide, to older women's specific strengths and disadvantages, and to their specific problems of economic safety and social integration;

urge also that special consideration be given to older persons suffering multiple discriminations, such as older migrants, persons with disabilities, persons belonging to minority groups, etc.;

emphasize the need to adequately disseminate already existing specific as well as cross-sectional research on older persons, to develop it further, and to make efforts to apply the results in policy formulation and practice at all levels;

call on educational systems and religious communities concerned with character formation, and on the media, to seriously accept the challenge of promoting positive attitudes towards lifelong ageing and being old, guided by principles of exchange, sharing and tolerance;

suggest that the United Nations Programme on Ageing in the Division for Social Policy and Development, which serves as the UN Secretariat for the World Assembly on Ageing and is entrusted with drafting a revised Plan of Action on Ageing and a Long-Term Strategy on Ageing, be strengthened, both by the United Nations system, by experts and NGO actors in the field of ageing;

affirm our willingness as non-governmental organizations to fully cooperate in all endeavours to do justice to the needs and aspirations of societies for all ages.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE